

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2693

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMSVBWMSY LAGOS 7536

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 3831

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS GH

SUB: AN ACHEAMPONG-OKAI RIFT?

1. THE PLANNED VISIT OF CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF
MAJOR GENERAL LAWRENCE OKAI TO THE UK, WHERE HE WAS
TO BE THE GUEST OF THE BRITISH CDS, WAS CANCELLED AT THE LAST MINUTE
MAY 15, AS UK HICOMER MILLS AND OTHER WERE WAITING
FOR OKAI AT THE AIRPORT FOR HIM TO BOARD THE PLANE.

2. ACCORDING TO BRITISH, A MESSENGER FROM OKAI'S OFFICE
APPEARED AT AIRPORT, WHISPERED A MESSAGE TO AIR FORCE
COMMANDER BEAUSOLEIL, WHO THEN PASSED WORD TO MILLS.
BEAUSOLEIL GAVE NO REASON AS INDEED HE HAD NONE.
OKAI LATER SENT WORD TO MILLS THAT HE MIGHT POSSIBLE BE
ABLE TO DEPART MAY 16 AND ANOTHER SET OF RESERVATIONS
WERE SECURED. ON THE 16TH, GOG CANCELLED THIS AS WELL AND
SINCE HAVE ASKED THAT THE VISIT BE RESCHEDULED "IN
A FEW WEEKS".

3. BRITISH REACTION IS ONE OF OFFENDED PARTY. BRITISH CDS HAS
STATE THAT THERE WILL BE NO TIME PRIOR TO MID-OCTOBER WHEN
VISIT CAN CONVENIENTLY BE RESCHEDULED. BRITISH HIGH COM
OFFICER TOLD US THAT BRITISH MILITARY IN UK ARE ANGERED BY WHAT
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THEY TAKE AS HEIGHT OF DISCOURTESY AND IN NO MOOD TO

RESCHEDULE THEIR OWN PROGRAMS TO ACCOMMODATE GHANAIS.

4. REASONS FOR CANCELLATION ARE UNCLEAR TO US AND TO BRITISH. ONE THEORY ADVANCED IS THAT OKAI MAY HAVE TAKEN THE ACTION ON GROUNDS THAT ACHEAMPONG IS SHAKY AND HE DID NOT WANT TO BE OUT OF COUNTRY WHEN AND IF CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT TOOK PLACE. ANOTHER IS THAT ACHEAMPONG TOOK STEP IN RETALIATION FOR OKAI'S FAILURE TO GO TO ANGOLA AS HAD BEEN PLANNED FOR PREVIOUS WEEK. STILL ANOTHER IS THAT ACHEAMPONG'S ANNOYANCE WITH OKAI IS SO GREAT THAT HE DECIDED ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT THAT HE WOULD DENY THE CDS PRIVILEGE OF TRAVELLING TO BRITAIN.

5. ANNOYANCE IS BASED ON SEVERAL ISSUES, THE PRINCIPAL OF WHICH IS ALLEGATION OF OKAI'S INVOLVEMENT IN SHADY FOREIGN EXCHANGE DEALS. IT IS REPORTED THAT COMMISSION HEADED BY ROVING AMBASSADOR JOE APPIAH WHICH INVESTIGATED OPERATIONS OF DANISH FIRM BRISCOE HAS TURNED UP EVIDENCE THAT OKAI IMPORTED VEHICLE FOR MUCH LESS THAN STATED COST. ACHEAMPONG (THROUGH APPIAH) IS SAID TO HAVE SIMILAR EVIDENCE AGAINST BEAUSOLEIL. CONFRONTED WITH APPIAH'S CHARGES, BOTH OKAI AND BEAUSOLEIL HAVE DENIED THEM. AS SECOND REASON, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL REPORTS, IS THAT OKAI WAS STRONGLY CRITICAL OF ACHEAMPONG'S ACTION IN CANCELLING VISIT OF SECRETARY KISSINGER AND HAS APPARENTLY BEEN NOISING HIS CRITICISM ABOUT.

6. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO SEE THE ULTIMATE DIRECTION ACHEAMPONG'S LATEST CANCELLATION ACTION WILL TAKE. BRITISH ANNOYANCE IS LIKELY TO DIE DOWN SOON BUT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ACHEAMPONG AND OKAI COULD LEAD TO MORE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS. IF ACHEAMPONG IS CONVINCED OF ACCURACY OF APPIAH'S INFORMATION AND IF HE CAN GAIN SUPPORT OF SMC, IT IS POSSIBLE RESULT COULD BE DEPARTURE OF OKAI FROM CDS POSITION. IT WOULD NOT BE THE FIRST TIME NUMBER ONE MAN HAS FEARED STRENGTH OF NUMBER TWO MAN AND HAS FOUND MEANS TO DISPOSE OF HIM.
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